Idaho National Laboratory receives second round of Department of Homeland Security funding for cyber threat reduction program

The U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory received a second round of funding this week from U.S. Department of Homeland Security to continue a multi-year cyber security program. The Control System Security Center will receive $11.7 million in 2005 to continue its efforts to secure the computer-aided control systems that operate the nation's critical infrastructures. Control systems are the digital automation systems that operate infrastructures such as the electric power grid, oil and gas refineries, and telecommunication systems.

"We are pleased to continue partnering with the Idaho National Laboratory to leverage their unique resources," said Robert Stephan, assistant secretary for Infrastructure Protection at the Department of Homeland Security. "The work for which they are using this funding is making real progress towards securing America's control systems."

The program was initially given $10 million in May 2004. With that funding, INL installed multiple full-scale control system components, hired employees with expertise in control systems and critical infrastructure industry sectors, hosted an awareness conference for industry, vendors and government officials, conducted training sessions, and engaged industry and vendor user groups at conferences and forums, and established partnerships with other national laboratories. The program also renovated an existing facility with state-of-the-art cyber security tools, routers, firewalls, and testing bays, and signed research and development agreements with other national and international control system and component vendors.

"This year we plan to focus our efforts on establishing baseline security assurance levels and cyber recommendations to increase industry security," said Julio Rodriguez, INL department manager for Critical Infrastructure Assurance. "We're at the point where industry is beginning to recognize the potential threats of unsecured control systems, and they are more willing to work with government agencies to improve the security of the nation's critical infrastructures."

Control systems typically use off-the-shelf operating systems that are more complex and expensive to upgrade and deploy patches for than traditional computers and often lack sufficient security measures such as firewalls and anti-virus software.

The Department of Homeland Security selected INL for this project because of its expertise in design, assessments and operational management of control systems across several industrial sectors. The Control Systems Security Center has utilized INL's management capabilities to establish partnerships with Sandia, Pacific Northwest and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories, as well as universities and private industry experts, to develop tools and solutions to improve control systems security.

Idaho National Laboratory is one of DOE's multi-year program national laboratories and performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE -- energy, national security, science and environment. The laboratory is the nation's leading center of nuclear energy research and development that is managed and operated by Battelle Energy Alliance.

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